

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN  
HOSPITALITY, RESTAURANT AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

FRIDAY, 24 JANUARY 2014

TRESTON INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE, TAGUIG, THE PHILIPPINES

### SALUTATIONS

*(TO BE PROVIDED LATER AFTER LIST OF INVITED GUESTS IS  
CONFIRMED)*

*Ladies and Gentlemen.*

*Distinguished Guests and Conference Participants.*

1. On behalf of the Organising Committee, I would like to welcome all of you to the International Conference on Contemporary Issues in Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management 2014. I would like to thank the Organising Committee for giving me the privilege of presenting a keynote address at this conference.
2. This conference is a joint initiative by Open University Malaysia (OUM) and the Centre for Logistics and Management Studies (Malaysia) in association with Treston International College, which has graciously agreed to host this conference here in Taguig. Thus, I would also like to thank Treston International College, led by the Executive Vice President Ms Sheryl G See, for the courtesies extended to me and to all the guests and participants, throughout this conference.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

3. I have always been a firm believer that higher education institutions can progress through mutual effort and collaboration. This is true across national borders, and is even more critical in a borderless world of education and knowledge development. This is the reason why conferences such as this one are such useful platforms in the knowledge development and cross-fertilisation of ideas that we, as educators, are universally committed to. In this regard, I must congratulate those involved with this productive transnational initiative that aims to make a contribution in the knowledge development here in The Philippines by focusing on contemporary issues in the hospitality, restaurant and tourism management sector.
4. What is particularly noteworthy about this conference is that it brings together the academia, industry, educators and students in an environment that encourages exchange and sharing of views, knowledge and opinion. In this regard, the theme of the conference is appropriate as countries in this region are increasingly focusing on the development of the services sector, of which hospitality, restaurant and tourism services hold tremendous potential. This sector could become a major catalyst for the growth of the entire region. There are vast opportunities in the development of several selected services sector in which ASEAN countries have inherent advantages, including large human resource base, increasingly level of higher education, language skills, cultural values and multi-ethnic diversity.

5. This is an opportunity for all who are present here to be better informed about some of the macro contemporary issues affecting the development of hospitality, restaurant and tourism services sector, whether in The Philippines or in Malaysia. This is more useful not just for the growth of the industry in The Philippines, where not only is it an important services sector in the national economy, but also a major contributor of professional and skilled manpower in hospitality and restaurant management to the outside world.
6. From our global observations, some of the contemporary issues affecting this industry include rapid technological development, including the sweeping changes brought about by social media, use of mobile devices, changing demographic patterns and travel trends especially in Asia, new manpower requirements, competition and a host of other issues.
7. In tandem with this development, we as higher education institutions must also try to take a closer look at how these issues impact the future development of the industry by encouraging more postgraduate research and studies as well as promoting discussions and engagements of this nature.
8. In Malaysia, tourism and hospitality is considered as an increasingly important economic sector. The first National Tourism Policy was introduced in the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), which is a five-year plan that focuses on all key areas related to national development, through which Malaysia has introduced broad policies for sustainable development of this industry. These policies include:

- a. Encouraging equitable economic and social development;
  - b. Developing environment-friendly tourism products as well as promotion of cultural and natural heritage;
  - c. Provision of soft loans for small- to medium-sized tourism-related projects; and
  - d. Adoption of an integrated approach to planning, continuing human resource development, and preservation and beautification of tourism and historical sites.
9. This has resulted in many positive developments in the country, and the business volume of tourism has been acknowledged as one of the largest in Malaysia, along with oil exports, food products and automobiles. In 2010, tourism was identified as one of the 12 National Key Economic Areas under the Economic Transformation Programme. This has driven many new plans and initiatives that hope to improve and upgrade tourist offerings and services to enhance Malaysia's connectivity to key priority markets.
10. Incidentally as well, 2014 has recently been launched as a "Visit Malaysia Year", thus demonstrating a very current national focus on tourism and hospitality. Official records show that we are currently the ninth most travelled destination in the world; creating an industry that rakes in more than MYR50 billion (USD15.2 billion) a year. In 2012, tourist arrivals registered over 25 million, which generated receipts exceeding MYR60 billion (USD18.2 billion). By 2020, Malaysia hopes to attract 36 million tourists to generate up to MYR150 billion (USD45.5 billion) in annual revenue. This clearly

represents tourism and hospitality as one of the major sources of income for the nation. Thus, major investments are being made to achieve these targets, including those related to training, education and manpower development.

11. I understand that, like Malaysia, The Philippines gives considerable attention to tourism and hospitality as well. The Philippines has always been considered a unique nation in Asia, blessed with many tourist-friendly destinations like Boracay and Cebu, as well as a rich culture, colonial and historical past as well as enviable biodiversity. Additionally, at about six percent of the annual GDP, it is clear that tourism contributes a significant source of income for The Philippines, just as it is for Malaysia. With regards to this, tourism and hospitality programmes are the most popular in the country, with more than 1,000 schools currently offering various tourism-related courses, including culinary and English language courses. I am sure that all these developments mean that this industry is expected to bring many positive outcomes to The Philippines.
12. However, the lack of qualified individuals has been frequently mentioned as a hindrance to the industry's development, in Malaysia as well as The Philippines. This includes all levels of work, from managerial, supervisory, skilled and even semi-skilled. These issues include a supply-and-demand mismatch where manpower is concerned, as well as shortage of sufficient and relevant training infrastructure, trainers, as well as strategies and policies with regards to quality human capital. Another major problem is fast and

widespread employee turnover, which can affect the quality and sustainability of services rendered.

13. This is where education and training is an imperative. International meeting points such as this conference can certainly prove to be beneficial to both Malaysia and The Philippines, if our countries want to realise our true potential in this industry. Thus, by discussing the salient issues in hospitality, restaurant and tourism management that impact both Malaysia and The Philippines, this conference is an opportunity for us to identify problems and gaps as well as share each other's success stories so that we can create means for universal and mutual benefits for both our countries.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

14. Higher education endeavours today are inherently linked to human capital development, which is an economic imperative that lies at the foundation of transforming the country from a middle income to a high income nation. Achieving globally competitive and innovation-led economy requires a systematic and comprehensive approach to nurturing, attracting and retaining skilled workforce for the nation. This is a national focus in Malaysia, and I am sure the same applies to The Philippines as well.
15. Given the rapid pace of the global economy, we will need to develop human capital to achieve a high-income status. It is necessary to radically raise the skills of the new workforce to increase their employability, skills, productivity and efficiency.

16. Taking a look at the distinguished speakers who are present here today, I am confident that we have much to gain from the discussions and presentations that will take place throughout this conference. Many of the students here will find this useful, as they can take advantage of the presence of these experts to be better prepared when they enter the employment market. I hope that this conference will contribute by introducing skills and knowledge that can help all hospitality, restaurant and tourism management students to have a fruitful career ahead. This can be an effective means of highlighting some of the major points relevant to the human capital development aspect in this part of the world.
17. It goes without saying that the educators from universities and colleges who are well-versed with the theme of this conference will also need to constantly review and remodel curricula to be more dynamic and appropriately suited to educating students in this industry. It is important to create links between industry and faculty in order to establish a means where curricula can be improvised and updated from time to time to retain currency and relevancy in the sector. As a sector that highly values the quality of services, it is also an imperative to engage industry professionals to lend their expertise through teaching. In many developing countries, the development of such industry-faculty links is still at the initial stage, and not up to par with some of the mature partnerships demonstrated in the more developed nations.
18. In addition to the role of industry experts, the role and impact of social media such as Facebook and Twitter and the pervasive application of

technologies and innovative management technologies also represent areas of curricula that will need close and constant attention in order to remain relevant in a fast-paced world.

19. In this regard, I am delighted to announce that OUM will be happy to collaborate with any college and university in The Philippines in areas that are relevant to both our institutions. Leveraging on our 14 years of experience as Malaysia's premier open university, which targets the working population, we can provide various forms of support to help enhance the value of the curricula in the subject area of hospitality, restaurant and tourism management.
20. To illustrate, allow me to describe our own institutional experience. OUM has initiated several collaborations here in The Philippines, with some universities and colleges that have deployed student interns under the Malaysian Government-approved International Practicum Programme to gain practical training at international fine-dining restaurants and hotels in Malaysia. This is the first time that a Government-approved structured practicum programme is available to student interns from The Philippines. The first batch of student interns has already returned to The Philippines after successfully completing the four-month practicum. We now have the second batch undergoing the same programme with more to join in the third batch expected soon.
21. I am certain that exposure of the student interns to selected establishments operating in multi-ethnic and cross-cultural environments and in international workplaces in Malaysia will



contribute towards a better understanding of their duties and roles when they enter the working world after their graduation. I am happy to note that our International Practicum Programme has been well received by an increasing number of colleges and universities and that the Commission for Higher Education endorses students to travel under our programme. I must thank the Commission for this recognition. OUM is ready to continue working together with the Commission to further improve the student abroad internship programme.

*Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

22. The Institute of Professional Development (IPD) and the School of Lifelong Learning (SoLL), OUM, has always believed in the importance of teaming up with professionals and experts of the industry, which has resulted in a wide range of programmes tailored towards industry requirements as well as skill development programmes at various levels of competencies. As such, we are now fast becoming one of the leading skills training providers for working adults in Malaysia. We have the organisational strength, network of leading local and international expertise and capabilities to deliver work-based executive development skills training solutions not only in Malaysia, but overseas as well.
23. By focusing on career development programmes, IPD and SoLL helped a number of Malaysians to achieve their dreams of obtaining additional professional and skill-based qualifications. To date, more

than 35,000 participants attended IPD and SoLL's training programmes, with over 6,000 who have obtained their Executive Diplomas and Career Certificates thus far.

24. Thus, I believe this conference represents a great opportunity to explore the potential areas of training that IPD and SoLL have initiated as well as to determine how best we can all meet future needs in this industry while ensuring a steady and sustainable pool of qualified, skilled and competent talent source.

*Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

25. I am delighted to hear from our consultant and collaborating partner, Mr G Durairaj of the Centre for Logistics and Management Studies, who has been responsible for promoting OUM in The Philippines, that more universities are now keen to seek partnership with OUM to collaborate in the International Practicum Programme. IPD, SoLL and OUM will welcome these partnerships as we believe that there are still many other opportunities in various areas of transnational collaboration to explore, not only in Malaysia and The Philippines, but beyond Asian shores as well.
26. I am also happy to announce that this conference will also witness a significant event where our commitment towards human capital development in the area of hospitality, restaurant and tourism management will culminate in the signing and exchange of a Memorandum of Agreement with 18 participating colleges and

universities in the Philippines. I consider this a great honour for IPD, SoLL and OUM.

27. To end my speech, I would like to thank all those who were involved in organising this esteemed conference and congratulate them for all their hard work in ensuring the success of this event, including Treston International College for being a gracious host, and the Centre for Logistics and Management Studies for its commendable initiatives.

28. Last but not least, I wish all the speakers, moderators and participants to this conference a very fruitful deliberation ahead.

Thank you.